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SUBJECT: CHISINAU: 2009 COUNTRY REPORT ON TERRORISM

REF: STATE 109980

¶1. Moldova is not a safe haven for terrorists or terrorist groups. No acts of international terrorism of major significance have occurred in Moldova. One significant act of possible politically motivated domestic terrorism, however, did occur. Moldova is not designated as a state sponsor of terrorism. The Government of Moldova (GOM) does not have an active, cohesive counterterrorism plan or strategy.

¶2. Moldovan support for counterterrorism was minimal, as compared to previous years when Moldova sent demining contingents to Iraq and had liaison officers assigned to Centcom Headquarters in Tampa, Florida. Embassy Chisinau and the GOM, specifically the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), did not conduct any joint counterterrorism training exercises as in previous years. One major Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) sponsored counterterrorism exercise had been planned for September, but was canceled because of economic reasons. No local inter-agency, inter-mission, or inter-sector counterterrorism training took place. A substantial CIS backed counterterrorism training exercise is planned for some time in 2010.

¶3. Moldova continued to work on implementation of its obligations under UNSCR 1373, Executive Order 13224 (the Terrorism Finance Executive Order), and provisions related to terrorist financing. The GOM enthusiastically welcomes information regarding terrorist financing from the USG and other bodies, and actively applies such information in its monitoring efforts through its Center for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption (CCECC). Moldova's 2008 joining of the Egmont Group of financial intelligence units may yield significant results in Moldova's counterterrorism efforts, although it is still too soon to judge its impact.

¶4. In 2009, no new action plan/strategy for counterterrorism had been developed, accepted, or implemented to replace the expired 2003-2008 National Action Plan on Combating Terrorism. There was no indication that the GOM would renew the Plan in the near future.

¶5. On December 5, 2008, the Moldovan Parliament ratified a blueprint on cooperation with the CIS states in combating terrorism. This document was originally signed in August 2005 and provides for joint measures aimed at the prevention and counter-action of terrorism and extremism. The document allows for the exchange of information on combating terrorism between CIS states, and provides for the extradition of persons suspected of financing or committing terrorist actions. The Moldovan Parliament also ratified the specific program on CIS member states' cooperation in combating terrorism and extremism for 2008-2010. This three-year program reflects the activities which were included in the blueprint. This pact did not have a meaningful impact on Moldovan counterterrorism efforts, as it placed no real obligations on the GOM.

¶6. The separatist-controlled Transnistria region of Moldova remained a potential area of concern. Moldovan law enforcement worked hard to track the whereabouts and activities of individuals moving in and out of Transnistria, an area where central-government police and security services are rarely able to operate. However, Post is unable to fully assess the ability of Moldovan law enforcement to operate in this region. Some of these individuals moving in and out of Transnistria were foreign students who remained in Moldova illegally, as the government lacked the resources to deport them when their visas expired. Corruption was endemic, and it was easy to obtain false travel documents in both Transnistria and Moldova. No formal cooperation on counterterrorism between Moldova and the separatist region of Transnistria took place.

¶7. The U.S. Embassy does not maintain liaison relationships or active, ongoing contacts with Transnistrian law enforcement and/or security service personnel. Embassy Chisinau requested meetings in the past with Transnistrian public-security personnel, to no avail, but has successfully engaged certain Transnistrian authorities on a recent counterfeiting case (although it is not yet clear whether this engagement will result in concrete cooperation and actions). The USG has not obtained any information about known terrorist organizations or terrorists operating from or within this region. Left-bank (separatist controlled Transnistria) and right-bank (GOM controlled) Moldova have no cooperation on counterterrorism matters, although right bank Moldova does not believe that Transnistria's existence harms right-bank counterterrorism efforts.

¶8. In right-bank Moldova, law enforcement and intelligence officials had the authority to intercept wire, oral, and electronic communications, but the investigator was required first to obtain prosecutorial concurrence and authorization from a judge. A specific section in the Prosecutor General's Office (PGO) would handle any terrorism-related case. The primary investigative body in counterterrorism cases is the Information and Security Service (SIS), Moldova's intelligence service. For cases of suspected domestic terrorism, the PGO decides who will complete the investigation. The MIA is usually authorized to take the lead.

¶9. On October 14, 2009, at a downtown Chisinau celebration of City Day, a grenade was thrown into the crowd of thousands, injuring over 30 persons. Moldovan authorities considered this to be a domestically motivated criminal act, and both the PGO and the MIA were investigating the attack. Neither could provide evidence regarding the origin of or reason for the attack. While there may have been some political motivation, the attack is most likely linked to some domestically-based solitary criminal actor, or emotionally disturbed person. It is improbable that the attack was in any way linked to an internationally based group.

¶10. In 2006, SIS was given the governmental lead to establish and manage a special Counterterrorism Center. In 2009, staffing and funding were minimal, as were its activities. The U.S. Embassy's law enforcement substantial assistance programs aid Moldovan efforts to impede the ability of terrorists and other citizens without proper documents to cross national borders. The programs also facilitated automation at ports of entry to ensure greater security of passports and travel documents.

¶11. Embassy point of contact for this report is Political/Economic Officer Zach Koester. Email: KoesterRZ@state.gov

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